
Director's Letter



PRESENTATION OF TWO DOCUMENTS

Among the most important documents that the Secretariat will submit for the consideration of the XXIV Pan American Sanitary Conference in September are *Health Conditions in the Americas, 1994 Edition*, and the *Report of the Director: Quadrennial 1990–1993, Annual 1993*.

The first of these publications attempts to describe, on the one hand, the salient features of the health situation of the Region as a whole and, on the other, those of each individual country. In addition, it includes analysis of the most pertinent data in order to identify the problems that will require attention in the immediate future. Those data confirm the need to continue the process of change in the health field, so that the observed improvements in traditional indicators, such as mortality rates, may be maintained and extended. As part of this process, the reorganization and restructuring of national health systems and their services must also go forward to consolidate the initial advances achieved in these areas.

The most notable characteristic evinced by this overview of the regional panorama is the diversity of health situations in the Americas—a diversity that implies profound and broad-based inequalities among the member countries and among population groups within each country. The portrait that emerges is a mosaic formed by a multitude of specific circumstances; some pieces of the mosaic represent population groups with health indicators similar to those found in the most developed countries, while other pieces show large sectors of the population living in conditions analogous to those in the poorest regions of the world. The health conditions that are described in this publication fully justify the transformations that have been proposed by PAHO for the purpose of reducing inequities through the more effective and efficient use of available resources.

The Report of the Director fulfills a different purpose. It summarizes and interprets the action of the Organization in the past four years, in light of its ongoing and progressive adjustment to the changing reality in the Region. The results of this effort can be seen in the expansion of PAHO's technical cooperation in several fields and in the new approaches the Organization has adopted.

Noteworthy among the latter is our constant striving to complement the traditional activities of the health field—namely, control and treatment of disease and other related problems—with a comprehensive vision of health as a part of the processes of development. Within the Report of the Director, several special reports celebrate some of the successes of the past four years, but above all, the Report confirms and reiterates the need to continue to pursue the enormous task of change with energy and commitment.



Carlyle Guerra de Macedo
Pan American Sanitary Bureau